

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

1.- 10. (Canceled)

11. (New) A communications system comprising:

a switch for accepting incoming calls;

a plurality of telephony access nodes for terminating said incoming calls;

a distributed redirect server hosted on each of said plurality of telephony access nodes for receiving said incoming calls from said switch, each of said incoming calls directed to one of the plurality of telephony access nodes.

12. (New) A communications system in accordance with Claim 11 further comprising:

a load balancing unit for receiving said incoming calls from said switch and directing each of said incoming calls to one of the plurality of telephony access nodes.

13. (New) A communications system in accordance with Claim 12 wherein the distributed redirect server determines whether one of said plurality of telephony access nodes has sufficient

resources to terminate one of said incoming calls.

14. (New) A communications system in accordance with Claim 12 wherein a connection between the plurality of telephony access nodes uses Internet Protocol.

15. (New) A method of terminating a call in a communications system, said communications system comprising a switch, a plurality of telephony access nodes, a distributed redirect server, the method comprising:

receiving an incoming call at said switch;

directing said incoming call from said switch to said distributed redirect server for termination at one of said telephony access nodes;

verifying, at said distributed redirect server, whether said one telephony access node has sufficient resources to answer said incoming call; and

terminating said incoming call at said one telephony access node.

16. (New) A method in accordance with Claim 15 wherein directing said incoming call further comprises:

directing said incoming call from said switch via a load balancing unit to said distributed redirect server.

17. (New) A method of terminating a call in a communications system, said communications system comprising a switch, a plurality of telephony access nodes, and a distributed redirect server, the method:

receiving an incoming call at said switch;

directing said incoming call from said switch to said distributed redirect server for termination at a first one of said telephony access nodes;

verifying, at said distributed redirect server, whether said first telephony access node has sufficient resources to answer said incoming call;

determining whether a second one of said telephony access nodes has sufficient resources to answer said incoming call when said step of verifying has concluded that said first telephony access node does not have sufficient resources to answer said incoming call;

sending a message from said first telephony access node to said switch indicating the ability of said second telephony access node to terminate said incoming call;

sending a message from said switch directly to the distributed redirect server associated with said second telephony access node; and

terminating said incoming call at said second telephony access node.

18. (New) A method in accordance with Claim 16 wherein directing said incoming call further comprises:

directing said incoming call from said switch via a load balancing unit to said distributed redirect server.

19. (New) A method in accordance with Claim 17 wherein, prior to said determining step, a status of each of said telephony access nodes is multicast to the others of said telephony access nodes.

20. (New) A method in accordance with Claim 17 wherein said step of determining comprises a step of consulting a resource availability status map which indicates the status of each of said telephony access nodes.

21. (New) A method in accordance with Claim 20 wherein said resource availability status map is compiled based on Internet Protocol multicast messages sent by each one of said plurality of telephony access nodes.

22. (New) A method in accordance with Claim 20 wherein each one of said telephony access nodes has a status of either Free or Busy.

23. (New) A method in accordance with Claim 20 wherein said resource availability status map is maintained at each of said telephony access nodes.